

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 201 983

CS 006 080

TITLE What Does That Mean? Developing Comprehension Skills.
Parent Participation - A Formula for Success.
INSTITUTION Indiana State Dept. of Public Instruction,
Indianapolis. Div. of Reading Effectiveness.
PUB DATE Aug 80
NOTE 34p.; For related documents see CS 006 077-079.
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary School Students; Elementary Secondary
Education; High School Students; Instructional
Materials; *Learning Activities; *Parent Child
Relationship; *Parent Participation; Parent
Workshops; Preschool Children; *Reading
Comprehension; Reading Skills

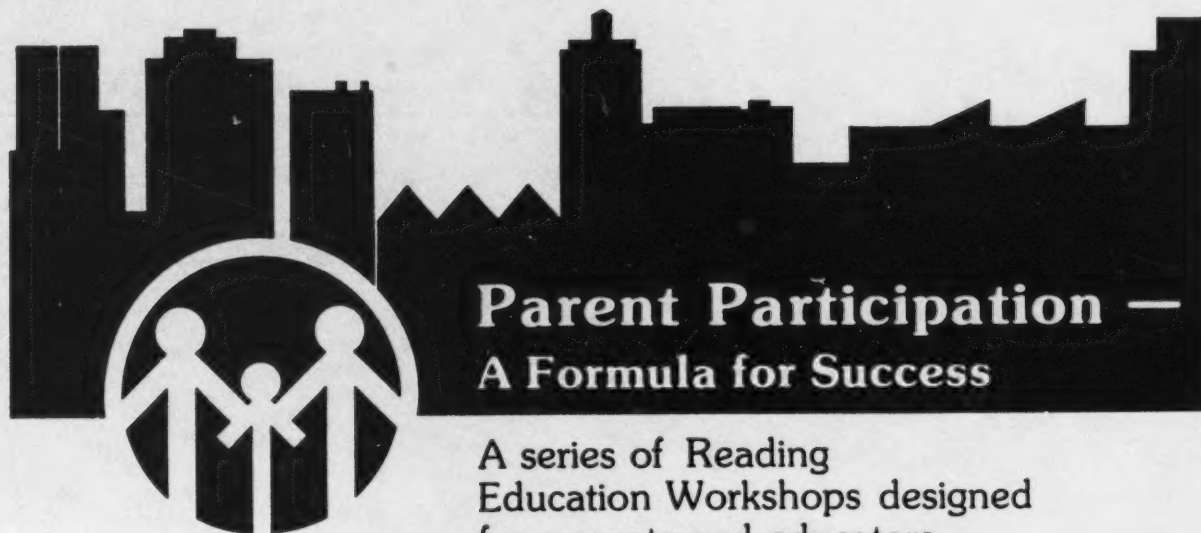
ABSTRACT

As part of a series of manuals prepared for reading education workshops for parents and educators, this booklet focuses on developing reading comprehension skills. Divided into three sections, the first section of the booklet suggests activities for preschool through grade two children to enhance comprehension after a story is read and to strengthen recall, sorting, and sequencing skills. Other described activities utilize rhymes, commercial games, toys, and household items. Activities that parents can use with children in grades three through six to develop word meaning, literal and interpretive comprehension, and critical reading are presented in the second section. The last section suggests that parents of children in grades seven through twelve provide an atmosphere conducive to homework, discuss events covered in the media with their children, and make them aware of the many different kinds of reading in their environment. Several specific ways to help adolescents with homework are recommended. (AEA)

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Parent Participation — A Formula for Success

A series of Reading
Education Workshops designed
for parents and educators

What Does That Mean? Developing Comprehension Skills

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Harold H. Negley, Superintendent

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Parent Participation -
A Formula for Success

What Does That Mean?
Developing Comprehension Skills

Division of Reading Effectiveness
Indiana Department of Public Instruction
Harold H. Negley, Superintendent
August 1980

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Introduction

Reading comprehension is the process of obtaining meaning from print. The ability to comprehend can be developed by general language facility, experience and the ability to think critically. These abilities facilitate reading as the child's own experiences are related to an author's ideas.

Parents can play an important role in developing their child's ability to read with understanding. This monograph provides many suggested activities for parents. The three sections cover preschool to Grade 2, Grades 3 to 6 and Grades 7 to 12.

The first section provides suggestions for children in preschool to second grade. For the preschooler, language development and early experiences are important. The parent can talk to the child, listen to the child, read to the child, take the child places and provide an attitude that indicates reading is enjoyable and valuable. In the primary grades, children learn skills necessary to make sense of print. Parents can discuss stories and ongoing events to develop understanding.

By Grades 3 to 6, most children have learned basic skills and are developing advanced reading comprehension abilities. The second section provides suggestions such as buying books for a child and helping a child use books to gain information.

The junior high/middle school and high school child must comprehend textbooks in content areas such as literature, social studies and mathematics. The third section includes ways parents can help their adolescent with study skills.

Developing Comprehension Skills:

Preschool to Grade 2

Preschool to Grade 2

Introduction

Children start to comprehend at a very early age by interpreting sounds, human voices and other environmental stimuli. They are introduced to print early in life through exposure to television, billboards, labels, games, magazines and personal possessions.

There are many ways parents can encourage and promote comprehension skills before school starts. Parents know their child's areas of interest and attention span better than anyone else.

The following activities are suggestions to enhance comprehension in the home in a fun and meaningful way. Learning can become an enjoyable experience if it is initiated early in life and is part of everyday experiences.

Activities to Do After a Story Has Been Read:

1. Ask where, what, how, when, why, who questions. These are the lowest level comprehension questions and form the basis for higher level comprehension.
2. Ask the child to indicate those things which might have happened before the story or after the occurrence of the incidents described in the story.
3. Discuss whether the story is real or imagined. Ask the child to state two things that could be true about the story and two things that could be false.
4. Ask the child to find the picture in the book that describes a certain situation in the story.
5. Dramatize the story after it has been read. Also, have children dramatize nursery rhymes, songs, poems, etc.
6. Ask the child to retell the story in proper sequence.
7. Ask "before" and "after" questions about incidents in the story. This relates to remembering story sequence.
8. Ask the child to make up a good title for the story. Discuss why the title is appropriate.

9. Have the child draw a picture of what a story was about, the main character or the place described in the story.
10. Have the child match statements made in the story with the names of the persons who said them.
11. Ask the child to tell how the characters felt at different times in the story and describe how he or she would have felt in that situation?
12. Read part of the story, then ask the child to guess how the story might end. Compare this guess with the way the story actually does end.
13. Ask the child to write a different ending to the story.
14. Fold a large sheet of paper into quarters and unfold it. On each of the four parts ask the child to draw a picture of the most important happenings in the story. Be sure they are on the paper in the order they occurred in the story. Children can retell the story as they unfold the paper.
15. Ask the child to list ten things he or she remembers about the story.
16. Make up a riddle about a character in the story and ask the child who the riddle is about.
17. Either the parent or child can: a) circle all the names of people in the story; b) underline all the words that describe people doing something; c) mark with red all the words that tell what kind of person, place or thing is being described. (Use consumable books, not library books or valuable hard-back books.)
18. Read only the title of a book or story and encourage the child to guess the main idea or plot.
19. Read a story in segments, over a period of days. Each day ask the child to recall what has happened so far and guess what might happen next.

Activities for Comprehension Skills

1. Give the child careful directions which can be followed step-by-step.

Example: 1. How to make a bed
2. How to make scrambled eggs

2. Say several words and ask the child to identify the one that does not belong.

Example: 1. sun, clouds, sky, moon, car
2. dog, cat, cow, bicycle, lion
3. Mike, George, school, Lisa, Evan
4. book, swing, pencil, desk, paper
5. TV, tape recorder, school, radio, record player

3. Read food labels, street signs, billboards, decals on trucks, etc., to the child. Discuss what the words mean and why the names were given to each particular item.

Example: 1. Carefree Cleaners
2. Tulip Tree Street

4. Build a diorama (a three-dimensional scene from a story), which can be made by using pipe cleaners, cotton balls, material scraps, yarn, crayons, colored paper and a shoebox, Kleenex box or cereal box.

5. Read two related stories and ask the child to explain the difference between the two subjects.

Example: 1. A story about butterflies and a story about moths
2. A story about space travel and a story about planets

6. Ask the child, "How does your name begin?" Tell the child to print his or her first name at the top of a large piece of paper. Use catalogs and magazines to cut out pictures of objects or people whose names begin with the same letter or sound and glue them on the paper. Hang this in a place where the child can read the words aloud to the family.
7. Send a message. Using magazines, catalogs and newspaper, have the child cut out words. After a large group of words has been collected, help select words to make a message, arrange them in proper sequence and glue them onto paper. The message can be a letter to someone, a telegram or a funny story.
8. Make a large card with "YES" on one side and "NO" on the other. Read or tell a story, asking the child to remember as many details as possible. After the story, ask questions which can be answered "YES" or "NO."

Example: 1. Was there more than one main character?
2. Did the story take place in the spring?

The child flashes "YES or "NO." If two or more children take part in this activity, they can compare and discuss their responses.

9. Work with cartoons.

(a) Glue a cartoon without words to a piece of paper. Above the cartoon draw large balloons. Ask the child to tell what the character might be saying and print the words in the balloons.

(b) Cut the balloons from the drawings of a cartoon series. Glue the cartoon drawings on one side of a paper and the balloons on the other. Ask the child to draw a line between the characters and the correct balloon.

10. Say an action word and ask the child to act it out.

Example: 1. Tiptoe, tumble, touch, jump, run, hop
2. More difficult: Bounce backwards bashfully, walk wiggily, jog jerkingly.

11. Use song activities.

(a) Songs with sequential recall:

"10 Little Indians"

One little, two little,
Three little Indians,
Four little, five little,
Six little Indians,
Seven little, eight little,
Nine little Indians,
Ten little Indian boys.

"One Potato, Two Potato"

One potato, two potato,
Three potato, four,
Five potato, six potato,
Seven potato more.

Others are:

"Old MacDonald Had a Farm"
"The Farmer in the Dell"
"This Old Man"
"The Mulberry Bush"

(b) Adapt these songs to word comprehension by changing the items to rhyming words or action words.

- (c) "Echo sing" by singing a phrase and having the child repeat it. This is a good activity to try while riding in the car or taking a walk.

12. Develop a TV activity.

- (a) Ask the child to listen carefully to a TV commercial. When finished, ask questions related to the main idea of the advertisement.

Example: What was the product called?
What could the product be used for?
Do you think we should buy it for our home?

- (b) Tell the child to listen for 2-syllable words and make a list of them.
- (c) Tell the child to listen for an unfamiliar word and look it up in a dictionary. Discuss the meaning of the word together.

Rhymes

Rhymes have meaningful repetition. Small children can learn them orally and then learn to read them. This will help children make the connection between oral and written language.

The following rhymes are fun! Tape record children singing or chanting these rhymes.

1. A counting-out game:

Engine, Engine Number Nine
Coming down Chicago line,
If the train goes off the track,
Do you want your money back?
(Player answers yes or no.)
Y-E-S spells yes and you are out.
or
N-O spells no and you are out.

2. A jump rope jingle:

Teddy bear, teddy bear, turn around.
Teddy bear, teddy bear, touch the ground.
Teddy bear, teddy bear, walk upstairs.
Teddy bear, teddy bear, say your prayers.
Teddy bear, teddy bear, turn off the light.
Teddy bear, teddy bear, say goodnight.

3. A finger play:

There were two blackbirds, sitting on a hill,
One named Jack and the other named Jill.
Fly away, Jack; fly away, Jill!
Come again, Jack; come again, Jill!

4. Just for fun:

Sally over the water,
Sally over the sea,
Sally broke a milk bottle
And blamed it on me.
Sally told Ma.
Ma told Pa.
Sally got a scolding.
Ha, ha, ha!

5. A rhyme that emphasizes colors:

Black, black, sit on a tack.
Brown, brown, you're a clown.
Green, green, you're a queen.
Purple, purple, you're a durple.
Red, red, stays in bed.
White, white, go fly a kite.
Yellow, yellow, wants a fellow.

Adaptations of Commercial Games

This approach is simple. Almost any commercial game can be turned into a reading game if, before taking a turn, the child is required to read a word, say two rhyming words, match homonym pairs, spell a word, etc.

Prepare separate decks of cards that can be used with more than one gameboard.

Use of Toys and Household Items

Parents can use imagination to help children with comprehension through the use of toys and other items in the home. Items which have educational uses include:

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Play telephone | 6. Old catalogs |
| 2. Walkie-talkie | 7. Records |
| 3. Puppets | 8. Photograph albums |
| 4. Tape recorder | 9. Telephone directory |
| 5. Art supplies | 10. Newspapers |

Examples: 1. Telephone and Telephone Directory:

Use the telephone directory to help the child learn the purpose of the yellow and white pages. The play telephone can be used to practice dialing and telephone conversations. In time, the child can utilize the actual telephone to call friends and relatives.

2. Photograph Album:

Glue photographs on album pages and have the child write or express verbally a caption for each photo.

3. Records:

- a) Ask the child to listen to a song and try to give a title to the song.
- b) Ask the child to sing from memory the words to a favorite song.

Developing Comprehension Skills:

Grades 3 to 6

Grades 3 to 6

Introduction

At the intermediate grade level, the child begins to learn from independent reading. Much of what a reader learns from reading depends on the experience brought to the printed page. If familiar with a subject or a topic, the child is able to compare his or her experiences with the author's information. A parent can help by developing the child's knowledge of word meanings, comprehension skills and experiential background. Parents can use the following activities to foster comprehension.

Developing Word Meaning

1. After the child listens to or reads a story, ask questions that pinpoint key words and their significance to the meaning of the story.

Example: The story is about boys landing on a deserted island.

Question: Where did the boys land?

If the term "deserted island" is unfamiliar, don't explain. Instead, have the child read further and/or guess from the rest of the story.

2. To help recognize word order, discuss word combinations as they relate to phrases of meaning.

Example: The car ran into the truck.

(Make sure the child understands who caused the wreck.)

Have the child end a sentence that you start.

Example: The cat pounced....
 The dog chewed....
 The man walked....

3. Synonym Game: This activity could be played while riding in the car, sitting around the dinner table or cleaning the kitchen.

One person begins by saying a word such as "play." The other players take turns giving similar words, such as "romp," "game," "joke," "sport," "pleasure," "entertainment," "amusement."

Variations of this idea:

- a. Famous pairs: salt-pepper
pencil-paper, shoes-socks,
Donnie-Marie, etc.
- b. Act out words such as "play"
and see how long it takes
others to guess (similar to pantomime).
4. Multiple meanings of words: Use the words that have different meanings in sentences. See how many different meanings the child can think of for each word.

Example: run

1. I saw the team run across the field.
2. The girl has a run in her stocking.
3. I watched the water run down the stream.
4. When you wash the clothes, make sure the colors don't run.
5. She had a run of good luck.

Other words include:

fall	turn	line
spring	lap	drive

5. Use the want ads of the newspaper. Help the child comprehend the ad by interpreting the abbreviations. Look in various sections of the paper: auto sales, homes for sale, lost and found, services, etc. The ads might look similar to these:

Lost: In vic. of 16th & Bosart, lg. blk.
& wht. mixed Terrier breed, ans. to "Boo."
Reward offered. 555-4000.

Don't miss this new home - NW of Glenbrook,
3 BR, LR, DR, breakfast nook, frplc, gar,
crpt, basmt, drapes.
\$57,500. 555-0040.

'78 vette conv., blue, exc. cond.,
350, 5-spd., mag. whls., radials,
reblt. eng. and trans. 2900 mi.
555-0040 aft. 5.

6. "Window Watchers" is a good rainy day activity. Ask children to write down what they have observed at random moments of the day. Give them guidelines such as: "Look for something yellow." Give a prize to the one who observes the most items.

Example:

1. What did you see that's red?
2. What did you see that's beautiful?
3. Find something that begins with the blend "gl."
4. Find something that is taller than you.
5. Name something that moves.
6. Look for something stationary. (vocabulary development)
7. What would happen if a dog saw the squirrel gathering nuts?
8. What do you see that would interest a botanist?

A variation involves writing a creative story about what was observed outside. Tell the child to pretend to be a squirrel gathering nuts ("What are you thinking about?") or the elusive butterfly ("How does it feel to fly?").

Developing Literal Comprehension

Literal comprehension is the primary, direct and exact meaning of a word or sentence in context. Who, what, when, where are considered to be literal comprehension questions.

1. Read a story or have the child read one.
Discuss what a good title would be for the story.
2. Use the newspaper to skim for main ideas, actual information and/or enjoyment. This emphasizes a variety of reading for the young adult.

Cut out articles from different sections of the paper. Ask the youngster to read different articles with different purposes in mind, such as:

- a. In the TV schedule, have the child find out when a favorite show is on.
- b. Read a headline article for factual, detailed information: "Who attended the school board meeting held last night?"

- c. Read the recipe section for a "how to make" lesson and follow the directions. The finished product could be enlightening and also delicious!
 - d. Read a special feature column such as "Dear Abby" for enjoyment/pleasure. Discuss if the child agrees with Abby's solution.
 - e. Read sports and define terms such as "inning," "error," "sacrifice" and "fly," as related to a baseball article.
3. Follow directions: Every game on the market has directions on "how to play." When purchasing a new game, or if there are new players who want to play a game, ask the child to read the directions silently and then tell the players the rules and procedures on how to play. See how well the group can follow these directions.
 4. Make sure the child can give directions as well as follow them. Have the youngster give directions to get someplace that is familiar, such as a baseball field, a favorite park, the school or a friend's house. This should be done while traveling to the location.
 5. When answering the telephone, make sure the child takes a message by answering the "Five W's" - who, when, where, what and why. The message should be written.
 6. Read and/or have the child read short articles or paragraphs. Stop after reading and ask about the main idea.

Example:

First I rode it like a scooter. I put one foot on a pedal and pushed with the other foot. Then I practiced on a little hill. I coasted slowly with both feet near the ground. Soon I learned how the brake worked. Finally, I learned to pedal with both feet.

What is the paragraph talking about? (riding a bike)

Interpretive Comprehension

Interpretive comprehension involves getting deeper meaning from what is read. In addition to simple, literal comprehension, interpretive comprehension is the ability to read between the lines, distinguish cause and effect, make comparisons and draw conclusions.

1. Cause and effect: A reader who knows why something happens knows the cause. Knowing that something happens as a result of something else is knowing the effect. Cause happens first, then effect. Read sentences to the child and allow him or her to tell the cause and effect. Give the cause and ask the child to supply the effect, or vice versa.

Example:

The baseball game was postponed _____
(because of rain)
Mary was late for school _____
(because she overslept)
Because I was thirsty _____ (I got a drink)

Say a word to which the child can respond with an effect.

Example:

germs - disease
freezing water - frozen toes
overeate - overweight
matches - fire

2. Raise questions that call on the child's power of observation: "How would you train your pet?" Make the youngster think through the answers independently and come to his or her conclusion. This is good practice for self-directed reading.
3. Signs and symbols are known throughout the world as a "universal language." Instead of using words, the symbols tell exactly what they mean. When traveling with the child, note the international road signs and/or symbols. Discuss their meanings for interpretation. Some common ones are:
4. Help the child interpret a story as a whole. Draw attention to the main idea, the key events, the order and sequence in which events occur and the important facts and details.

5. Help the child "read between the lines." Have the child predict outcomes, offer any solutions and draw conclusions by summarizing only what's been read. Encourage critical thinking and the ability to make judgments by asking, "Why did you like the story?" Show interest in the child's viewpoint and share ideas. Asking his or her opinion will encourage the child to become more perceptive.
6. Present several situations or actions that require various possible conclusions. Discuss each conclusion and be sure the child understands that each option is logical and correct under certain circumstances.

Example: What happens if you...

- a. shake a bottle of soft drink?
 1. It fizzes when you open it.
 2. Nothing, because you wait until later to open it.
 3. Tap the top before opening it.
- b. throw a rock into the water?
 1. At the very least, it makes ripples.
 2. It may make a big splash.
 3. It may hit a fish or frog.
 4. It may skim across the water.

Developing Critical Reading

Critical reading involves making personal judgments and evaluating what one reads. This includes distinguishing fact from opinion, discerning the author's intent, analyzing characters and developing critical thinking.

1. Read a fairy tale such as "Cinderella" and ask the child some thought-provoking questions: "Can a pumpkin really turn into a coach for traveling to a ball?"

After reading Phyllis McGinley's "The Horse Who Lived Upstairs," ask if the child has ever heard of a horse living upstairs? Is it possible?

Ask if animals, insects and birds are able to talk like Wilbur, Charlotte and Templeton in Charlotte's Web.

2. Judging a person's character in a story or book can help the child develop his or her own character.

Example:

How would you describe Amelia Bedelia's action?

What tells you Clark Kent is a hero in disguise?

In Charlotte's Web, if you owned Wilbur, would you do the same thing Fern did?

3. See if the child can make an inference from this riddle.

As I was going to St. Ives
I met a man with seven wives.
Every wife had seven sacks.
Every sack had seven cats.
And every cat had seven rats.
How many wives, sacks, cats and
rats were going to St. Ives?

4. People generally speak in two ways, directly and indirectly. Direct language is using words to say exactly what is meant. Words used in the indirect way do not mean what they seem to say and are called figures of speech or figurative language. They are used to enliven speech. Help the child understand what is being said or read by discussing the written language. See how the child interprets the figurative language.

Example:

She was going to jump off the hay loft but at the last moment she got cold feet.

Our talent show was a real smash.

Mrs. Green went through my house with a fine-toothed comb.

Cars like that are a dime a dozen.

5. Ask the child to determine if statements (oral or written) are fact or opinion.

Example:

Bob's cat is very funny.
My dog is a black poodle.
She has long ears and a loud bark.
She likes to pretend she is playing volleyball.

6. Give the child these thought-provoking puzzlers to stimulate critical thinking.

A woman gives a beggar 50¢. The woman is the beggar's sister, but the beggar is not the woman's brother. How can this be? (The beggar is a woman.)

I have two coins in my hand that total 55¢. One of them is not a nickel. What are the two coins? (One is not a nickel, but the other one is. Therefore, the two coins are a fifty-cent piece and a nickel.)

I have only one match. I enter a room in which there is a candle, an oil lamp, a woodburning stove and a fireplace. Which would I light first? (The match.)

A farmer had 19 sheep. All but 10 died. How many are left? (The 10 which are still alive.)

Other Comprehension Activities

1. Reading menus can build vocabulary and math skills. Collect menus from a variety of local restaurants.
 - a. Vocabulary development:
A la mode, poached, julienne, soup du jour, food names the child has not encountered. Discuss the meaning of the new terms.
 - b. Math:
Plan a complete meal for five persons under \$25. Plan the most expensive dinner that one person could order. Plan the least expensive. Compare the "country breakfast" (juice, eggs, sausage, hash browns, biscuits and jam) with items listed a la carte. How much would you save? Include the tipping cost of 15%.
 - c. Nutrition studies:
Name foods that are nutritious and well balanced and/or familiar foods that could be prepared differently. Experiment with ethnic dishes, such as Chinese, Italian, Mexican or Serbian.
2. Help the child make a calendar. Decorate each month with holidays, famous birthdays, family birthdays and special events. Help the child write a short paragraph on the history/origin of each month (e.g., how August was chosen as the eighth month).

When the calendar is complete and delightfully decorated, ask questions that the child can answer by referring to it.

Example:

How many Saturdays are there in July?

What does "Dec." stand for?

The third Wednesday falls on what date in September?

On what date is Labor Day?

3. Advertising can be beneficial to both math and reading skills practice. When the midweek ads and grocery store flyers arrive, sit down with the child and ask a variety of questions (literal, interpretive and creative/critical thinking).

a. Literal:

1. How much would three cans of tomatoes cost?
2. When is the bargain sale going to start and how long will it last?
3. What are the store hours?
4. Would it be cheaper to buy canned mushrooms or fresh?

b. Interpretive:

1. What do these abbreviations mean: pkg., botls., reg., lb., ctn.?
2. Find ten brand names and list them alphabetically.
3. Find five items that list how much you save if you buy now.
4. Find three phrases that state facts about products and three phrases that give opinions.

c. Critical/Creative:

1. Since chickens are on sale this week, do you think most people will buy several? Why or why not?
2. Do you think chickens will be on sale next week, too? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think so many items end with the digit "9"?
4. Pretend you have only \$5.00 to spend and plan a shopping trip to the market that includes at least one item from each food group: (1) meat; (2) milk, cheese, ice cream; (3) breads and cereals; (4) vegetables and fruits.

4. Comics can be used over and over again for building various comprehension skills.

a. Ask factual, inferential and/or critical thinking questions such as:

1. What word tells you that Charlie Brown is unhappy? (Blah)
2. What time of day is it? How do you know?

3. What does Peppermint Patty mean when she says that this kind of test is "like giving a menu to a starving man"?
- b. Double meaning: The point of many comic strips lies in the use of words with more than one meaning, i.e., "punning."
 1. What did Blondie mean to say?
 2. What did Dagwood think that Blondie was saying?
 3. Dagwood's misunderstanding makes the story funny, but often it's important to make meanings very clear. How would you reword what Blondie said so that no one would be likely to misunderstand?
 4. List five other double-meaning words that you might use in a comic strip. Try building a funny situation around one of the words.
- c. Drawing conclusions: Look for comics that invite discussion.
 1. What do you think might happen next? Why?
 2. How would you feel if you were Superman?
 3. How would you feel if you were Lois Lane?
 4. Why do you think your chosen action would be the right one to take in this situation?
- d. Sequencing: Make the task more challenging by putting separate frames from three episodes of the same strip into one envelope. Have the child sort out the frames both by story and by sequence within each story.

Conclusion

With these suggested activities in mind, parents can be a part of their child's reading experience. To determine how well the youngster understands what is read, answer these questions.

1. Basic Word Meaning:

Can the child read and identify the meaning of a word within a sentence when clues are provided? When they are not provided?

2. Literal Comprehension:

Can the child identify the main idea, supporting details and conclusions of paragraphs?

Does the child demonstrate the ability to follow directions?

Can the child identify the sequence of events or ideas in a passage?

3. Interpretive Comprehension:

Does the child:

- a. draw conclusions implied in a paragraph or passage?
- b. identify cause-and-effect relationships implied in a paragraph or passage?
- c. predict an outcome implied in a paragraph or passage?

4. Critical Comprehension:

Can the child read and identify a statement as fact or opinion?

When reading a paragraph or passage, can the child identify whether the writer's purpose was to inform or persuade?

Developing Comprehension Skills:

Grades 7 to 12

Grades 7 to 12

Introduction

At the secondary level, ability in literal, interpretive and critical reading is necessary to read content area material. Often children who are having difficulty in content area classes such as social studies, science or health have problems comprehending what they read. This may be due to weaknesses in basic comprehension skills or to inability to concentrate on the material being studied. Parents can help their child by providing an atmosphere conducive to homework, by discussing events covered in the media and by making the child aware of reading in his or her environment.

Comprehension and Homework

Parents' assistance with homework is most effective when they provide beneficial help and avoid criticism of the child's weaknesses. The purpose is to guide the child through the assignment, letting the student do the actual work. Parents should not do the work for their child.

There are a number of things parents can do to help their child with homework. Some of these are outlined below.

1. Discuss the assignment with the child and help determine what is being asked; then decide the best method for attacking the problem. (Some children have trouble understanding how to begin or what the directions mean.)
2. Discuss the purpose of the assignment. Look over the material to be read and discuss with the child some questions which will need to be answered while reading the assignment. Focus upon the questions provided by the author. Discuss the titles of the various sections of the chapter and, based upon these clues, decide what ideas the author is most likely to stress.
3. If an assignment deals with a topic about which you have some knowledge, share what you know about the subject. This will help the child develop a frame of reference for the material that is to be read.
4. Encourage the child to bring home tests and other graded work. Discussing these can help determine the reason for the mistakes made. On a test, try to determine the types of comprehension that caused problems by asking such questions as:

- a. Were most of the errors made because of an inability to remember details (names of persons or places, dates, facts stated in the reading material)?
- b. Were the mistakes primarily with questions which asked the student to remember facts and then go beyond these facts to draw conclusions on his or her own? In this case, the correct answer would not be found written in the text and would depend on comprehension of the main ideas.
- c. Were the errors with questions which asked the student to express an opinion or to evaluate what was read in light of his or her own knowledge, experience or beliefs?

After determining the types of questions missed, discuss what was done to prepare for the test and how this might be modified in studying for the next test. Decide whether the student:

- a. spent too much time learning details only.
 - b. looked only for the broader ideas being presented.
5. Help the child become acquainted with the textbook and the elements the author has included which will assist in understanding the content. Most textbooks on the secondary level follow a characteristic format. Sit down and discuss this format when the child has a reading assignment in social studies, for example.
 6. Help the child preview assignments. Previewing done before reading permits one to get acquainted with the general topic. It prepares the reader to notice and understand main ideas and important details. By focusing on asking questions throughout the reading process, it also helps one concentrate and remember what is read. There are eight main steps for previewing:

- a. Read the title:

At this point the child begins to decide what the assignment will discuss. Many children never read titles. Ask the child:

"What will this chapter be about?"

"Do you already know anything about this topic?"

- b. Read the introductory paragraph (if provided):

Some authors provide an introductory paragraph in which they tell the student what information is to be discussed. This is the first place the child can begin to form questions to be answered while reading. Ask the child:

"What information does the author tell you to look for as you read?"

c. Read dark-type headings:

Most authors divide their chapters into sections, using headings in dark type. The child can use these to understand what major ideas the author will discuss and how they have been organized. If each heading is turned into a question beginning with "who," "what," "when," "why" or "how," it helps to focus the student's attention toward the purpose of reading. Many children have trouble concentrating as they read. Constant redirection of attention, with a new question to answer after each short section, helps overcome this problem.

Ask the child:

"Look at the chapter sections. What ideas will the author discuss?"

"What are some questions you will need to answer for each section?"

d. Look at illustrations, maps and graphs:

Pictures set the stage for reading and introducing important people, events or cultural details. Maps show the location and features of areas being discussed. Graphs and charts often clarify important facts or lines of organization. Many children do not pay attention to these visual aids. There will usually be a written caption under each aid to explain its purpose. Ask the child to look at these aids and explain what information they give:

"What information does this picture give about what the author discusses?"

"What can you learn from this map about the area being studied?"

"What information does this graph show?"

e. Look for other textbook aids:

All clues provided by the author are important to comprehension: 1) New vocabulary words are often placed in italics. Meanings are often given in the same paragraph or in the glossary (dictionary) at the end of the book. 2) Numbered lists in the text should

alert the child to important information. 3) Paragraphs in special sections or with special borders should alert the child to information usually added to illustrate what is being discussed.

Ask the child:

"How can you tell which words are important in this chapter?"

"Where can you find their meaning?"

"What information does this numbered list provide?"

"What type of information does the author provide in these special sections?"

f. Read the summary paragraph (if provided):

At the end of the chapter, many textbooks have summary paragraphs that review the author's main ideas. Reading these before reading the chapter may help determine some of the ideas. Direct the child's attention to these features of the text and help compose questions from the summary that can be answered while reading.

Ask the child:

"What ideas has the author tried to stress in this chapter?"

"From your preview of the headings, can you guess where the author includes this content?"

g. Read the questions at the end of the chapter:

Authors usually ask questions about the most important ideas. Reading these questions before the chapter will help the child know what information the author (or teacher) wants learned. The student should look for the answers to these questions while reading.

Ask the child:

"From your preview of the chapter, can you guess where you might find the answer to each question? Use the headings, pictures, maps and other graphics."

h. Read the assignment:

After previewing the chapter, the child should be prepared to read and understand its content. Have him or her read a heading to you, phrase it as a question, and then tell you the answer. After demonstrating an ability to do this, the child can be left alone to proceed with the assignment.

Several points should be kept in mind when using the previewing study method:

- a. Realize that the purpose of the study method is to encourage the child to set purposes for reading the

material by previewing the entire assignment before beginning to read it. By becoming familiar with its organization and content, and by posing questions to answer while reading, the child will more easily comprehend the ideas being presented.

- b. Do not expect a child to begin immediately to apply all the elements discussed in the study method. Consider the student's abilities and focus your efforts on showing the overall method. Single out one or two components to try with the present assignment.
- c. Create questions for the child to answer as you talk about the various components of the study method. Encourage the student to become involved in answering the questions rather than waiting for you to answer them.
- d. Be available to preview other assignments. Help check comprehension after studying by asking the questions discussed during the preview.
- e. Be patient. Success will depend on your ability to avoid criticism if the correct response is not given. This is a new experience for the child and it will take time to be able to use the method efficiently.

Comprehension From Media and the Environment

Comprehension, or the ability to understand, is necessary in all aspects of one's environment. It is necessary to comprehend what is heard, observed, seen, felt and read. When a child listens to the radio, watches a movie, views a work of art or asks a store owner for assistance, it is a way of developing his or her experiential background and ability to comprehend. Interaction with the environment and with various media develops a child's language facilities and reading comprehension.

Interaction With Environment

Because comprehension occurs every day, in all surroundings, parents can make use of common events to develop their child's comprehension. The role which parents can play in helping to achieve "environmental comprehension" has three aspects:

- 1. directing the child toward new experiences and information;
- 2. discussing with the child what has been read, observed or experienced;

3. providing opportunities to use the new knowledge and understanding in everyday life.

Parental help can be related to: survival skills, interpersonal relationships, career planning, and psychological and physiological changes.

Interaction With Various Media

Comprehending by listening can be developed daily.

1. Discuss with the child what is heard while listening to the radio, conversations, television, movies or plays. If a movie or television program is appropriate in terms of level and interests, the child should be able to agree or disagree and comment on likes and dislikes. If a child is not able to comment on a program, the parent can develop comprehension through discussion.
2. Prepare the child for listening. Parents can consider all the background knowledge they bring to a media event and if possible, inform their child of relevant facts or personal interests in the topic.

Combining media forms can aid the child's understanding.

1. Including several sources of media allows one to get information from various perspectives. For example, a child who enjoyed a movie based on a book may want to read the book.
2. Note the way a current event is reported by reading accounts in a magazine or newspaper, watching television news and listening to radio newscasts.

Developing an interest in books can help.

1. Buy books for the child as presents to show that you value them.
2. Read to the child. Most people enjoy being read to all their lives. Don't stop reading aloud if the child who was read to when younger still enjoys it. Listening to books or stories develops vocabulary and interest.
3. Read books yourself. The child's view of the value of reading will develop from the reading habits of those he or she observes. Provide a good model of reading behavior.

4. Discuss the books the child has read in a casual way. Ask if he or she enjoyed a book, found it useful or would recommend you read it. This can encourage discussing reading in a nonthreatening way. Occasionally, you can both read the same book. While not competing in speed or the ability to remember facts, you can share impressions and enjoyment of reading.

Help the child develop a questioning attitude about the world and approach material with interest, curiosity and the expectation that it will make sense. A parent can do this by interacting with the child and teaching him or her to predict events and recognize cause and effect.

1. Help the child by asking for a prediction on how a movie or book will end, what information will be found in a particular reference book, what a friend will say in response to a certain behavior or what will happen in a project you are doing at home.
2. Help the child understand the cause of unexpected events or the cause of a problem being experienced.

By being aware of opportunities to develop comprehension, parents can help their child with reading in the secondary grades.